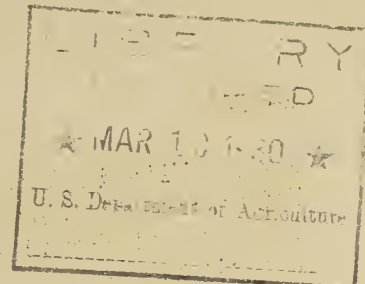


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QUESTIONS HOMEMAKERS ASK.

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through Station WRC and 22 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, February 28, 1930 at 12:55 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Those of us in the Bureau of Home Economics here in Washington sometimes feel as though you homemakers were playing a regular "Ask me another" game with us. Your letters come so thick and so fast, and they ask us so many questions, on so many different topics. But the Department of Agriculture, as you know, is glad to play the "Ask me another" game with anybody interested in its research work. We want you to keep tabs on what we are doing. You have no idea how helpful your letters sometimes are to us in choosing what problems to concentrate on, and even in writing our bulletins.

Today I have chosen just a few of the questions that we know are puzzling lots of homemakers.

The first one is about aluminum ware. Some way the idea has got abroad that aluminum ware is dangerous to health, that foods cooked in aluminum utensils absorb some kind of poison. How such a notion got started is hard to say. Certainly it was not really to protect the public from harm. Perhaps the original ideas to help the sale of some other kind of cooking utensils. But in the end such trade wars serve merely to befuddle the public; they benefit nobody. The Department of Agriculture itself has not conducted any experiments on aluminum ware. We have, though, made a careful study of the scientific literature reporting experiments done by other reliable research institutions. Not one statement can we find, backed by scientific research, that even suggests aluminum ware as the cause of disease or as a menace to health.

The next question is about vitamins in tea, especially green tea. Is it true, the letters ask, that green tea is a rich source of the so-called vitamin C, which helps to keep the body in good health? This we can answer from our own research. In the nutrition laboratory in the Bureau of Home Economics, tea was brewed from three different samples of green tea, and fed to guinea pigs. They had other foods, too, at the same time, but this "basal diet," as it is called, was absolutely devoid of vitamin C. This, by the way, is the method followed in all these vitamin-feeding experiments. The animals have a general diet that supplies everything, but one vitamin. Then when the food under test is added to their ration, it soon becomes apparent, by the way the animals look and act, whether that particular food is a good or a worthless source of a certain vitamin. But to get back to the vitamin experiments on tea. The tests were repeated again and again, under the direction of Dr. Hazel E. Munsell, until it was certain that tea did not contain

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enough Vitamin C to keep a guinea pig alive, drink as much as he could. This does not mean though that you and I can not drink tea for pleasure, even if not for vitamins. There are plenty of everyday foods, such as the citrus fruits and green leafy vegetables, that are rich in vitamin C, and A and B as well. So there need be no lack of vitamins, even if green tea is worthless in this respect.

If you want to know more about what vitamins are, and what foods contain the different vitamins, we shall be glad to send you our circular on "Vitamins in food materials." It has been prepared by Miss Sybil L. Smith of the Office of Experiment Stations. For over ten years, Miss Smith has been reading every scientific report on vitamin research, as soon as it appears in print. In this circular she brings together the results of vitamin studies all over the world. The circular is free. If you want it, just write to the Bureau of Home Economics, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

So much for vitamins today. The next question has to do with clothes, or, to be exact, with cotton fabrics for summer dresses. Even if we didn't know it in any other way, we could tell by our letters when the spring sewing fever begins to catch people. One of the sure signs is the question, How can I set the color in fabrics? And will green hold its color better than lavender? As to home methods of setting the color in fabrics, our textile experts say bluntly -- there is nothing in them. If the color of a fabric were set by salt and water, or an alum dip, or a teaspoon of pepper in the wash boiler, or any other such simple means, the manufacturer would have treated his cloth with that process before ever he put it on sale. For the more color-fast a fabric is, the better sales value it has. So save your salt, or your alum, or your pepper, and your time, advise the textile chemists. Buy fabrics marked with a label that guarantees them not to fade. Then if they do fade, return them to the store, and ask for your money back.

When it comes to one color being more fast than another, here again the textile experts shake their heads. There are various classes of dyes, some better than others. A blue fabric and a pink fabric dyed with a poor quality dye are equally likely to fade. But if the dye is good, a green material will hold its color with any other in the rainbow.